



Alexios Mar Eusebius  
Metropolitan

# MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

## DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA



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Blessings to our Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Deacons, Office bearers and all the faithful of our Diocese!

Dearly beloved,

The days of preparation for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are upon us. We observe 25 days of increased prayer and fasting from all our worldly pleasures in order to receive the heavenly king. It is important to note that during any Lenten period, external fasting alone is not enough. In addition to restricting our food intake, we must also apply ourselves to internal fasting, which consists of resisting such things as pride, dishonesty, anger, greed and other such vices. This Lent is especially for the celebration of the birth of the King of Peace. We need to develop a character of the innocence of the shepherds rather than the character of Herod's inclination for the killing of goodness.

Christmas is a season of exchanging gifts and we know that the tradition can be traced back to the biblical story of the presenting of gifts to the baby in the cave by the Magi. We also have the story of the "Christmas father" distributing gifts in secret based on the story of St. Nicholas. One way or other, each and every Christian during Christmas season exchanges gifts with those close to them. However, one of the ancient commandments and the law even before the formation of the ten commandments, that we need to give one tenth of our income as a gift to God, is not seen in the life of our people. The tradition and biblical command of presenting one tenth to God should be a regular practice and part of life. In Genesis 14:20, we see that when Abraham got back all his wealth captured by the enemy kings, he rushed to Melchizedek and paid one tenth of his wealth and only then was he satisfied. When we realize that all the wealth we have, no matter how great or small, is a gift from above, we automatically pay the tithe. Genesis 28 mentions that when Jacob realized the presence of God in Bethel, where he slept for a night and saw the great vision of angels ascending and descending, he took a pledge there to pay one tenth of his income to the Lord.

Throughout the Holy Bible we see the necessity of setting apart the tithe for a good cause. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts. See, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Dear children, let this Christmas season be a time to take a vow before God who has blessed us immensely in this part of the world in the midst of the challenges, sufferings and calamities of this modern era. We must take the pledge to offer our continued gift and tithe to the infant born in Bethlehem so that through such a way of life Jesus will continue to be with us, just like the experience of the Magi.



God has blessed us by allowing the diocese to acquire a large piece of land in this country for the church. We have dreams for different projects that the whole church feels are of vital importance for the spiritual and temporal sustenance of the varied age groups among our faithful. God blessed our people to support and to fulfill all these dreams in the land He has given us. They can be materialized only with your decision of setting apart your tithe for this great cause and rewarding endeavor. If you strictly and consistently set apart your tithe you can pay all the church dues, contribute to all your personal charities and fully fund this great project we have before us. It is my humble request for all of you to take a decision this Christmas season to set apart one tenth of your income, and your decision will be considered by God in heaven, just like the gift the Magi presented to the King at the time of His birth.

Again, dearly beloved, the first memorial day of the Late Lamented His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas is on December 9, 2013. So it would be good to commemorate the passing of this blessed hierarch on Sunday, December 8, 2013. At the diocesan level, this will be conducted along with the Diocesan Center inauguration on November 30th. Every parish in our diocese must observe that day with a memorial service celebrating the life of this saintly Metropolitan.

We take this opportunity to extend our love, prayers and blessings for the upcoming Nativity Lent and hope that everyone will have a blessed celebration of the birth of our Lord. Along with the angelic hosts, let us cry aloud and proclaim: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward all mankind!”

Your shepherd in Christ,

Alexios Mar Eusebius  
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